

WORLD'S BIGGEST WRESTLING MAGAZINE

SEPT. 1979

PRO *wrestling* ILLUSTRATED

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FOR THE OTHER'S DOOM?

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KING'S COURT

By Peter King

WEELCOME TO THE debut issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*.

For those familiar with wrestling magazines, we hope to become an essential part of your wrestling library. For those new to the world of wrestling journalism, we expect to be an old friend in a very short time.



We hope *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* will become your favorite magazine. If you have any comments, send them to: PWI, Box 48, Rockville Ctr., NY 11571.

Perhaps a few words of introduction are necessary. The job of a wrestling magazine is not to merely report on what you see on television or at the arena. It is to dig deep beneath the surface, to bring to light the story

which would otherwise remain buried. This requires a staff of editors, reporters and photographers with uncommon skills. *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* has such a staff.

Managing Editor Bill Apter is respected world-wide for his contributions to wrestling. As a photographer, Bill has advanced wrestling photo-journalism from infancy to an art form. His photo studies of men like Bob Backlund and Bruno Sammartino have won numerous awards.

No magazine can exist without a veteran reporter. Matt Brock is ours. He is the best in the world. 'Nuff said.

Associate Editor Randy Gordon believes wrestling must be what it once was—a scientific battle between two superb athletes. His mission is to cut the cancer of rulebreaking from the body of wrestling. Each month Gordon will report on his battle against the evil elements of wrestling.

Putting everything in its proper perspective is the job of Gary Morgenstein. His incisive comments on the wrestling scene will appear every month. Morgenstein's qualifications for this difficult assignment are enormous. He is an author and philosopher, but most of all, he is a friend of wrestling.



Steve Farhood is a young man who turned down the prestigious Julius Scholarship of Huxley University to work for *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*. After graduating first in his class from a top journalism college, Farhood was swamped with offers from every top American newspaper. But he decided to make wrestling his life's work. I think both Farhood and wrestling are enriched by the young man's courageous choice.

Finally, there is Dan Shocket. Shocket has made his reputation by supporting the wrestlers fans call "bad guys." I know you will almost never agree with Shocket's views. But I believe his voice should be heard. Wrestling fans are intelligent enough to make up their own minds.

Every month, aided by numerous photographers and correspondents, this uniquely talented staff will bring you the world of professional wrestling. Now, just sit back and enjoy. Because this first issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, as well as all succeeding issues, belongs to you, the wrestling fan. □

RINGSIDE

With Bill Apter

NO MATTER WHERE Greg Valentine goes, whether to an arena, a movie or a restaurant, Chief Jay Strongbow is just a few steps away. "I'm following him everywhere," says Strongbow. "It's making him a nervous wreck. I just want to ruin his life like he ruined mine when he broke my leg. Now that I'm okay, it's his turn to suffer!"

Mil Mascaras accepted a match in Texas against former NWA champion Terry Funk. Mil admits that Funk is just fooling everyone by saying he wants to leave wrestling and stay in the Hollywood movie scene. "I can tell his heart is still with the sport," notes the popular masked star. "He's not going to quit so easily." Mil adds that Funk has been one of his five most aggressive opponents.

Can Rick Steamboat win the United States heavyweight championship back from Ric

Flair? That is the question even Steamboat can't answer. "Ric Flair is my biggest challenge and I can't say yes, I can beat him anytime," young Steamboat states. "Yes, I want the title back, but it's easy to say that. Flair wants to keep that title more than life itself. He's not going to drop his guard for one moment in his matches against me."

Garvin. Bad feelings flow freely between the two. Jim is turning to Buddy Rogers, not Kox for advice. This has also triggered a hot feud between Rogers and Kox. Kox is now being booed by fans in Florida. He had been a fan favorite for quite some time.

Gary Hart's duo of Mark Lewin and Spoiler work very well as a tag



Chief Jay Strongbow (left) is following Greg Valentine wherever the blond rulebreaker goes. Strongbow wants revenge because Valentine broke his leg. Spoiler (above) has been teaming with Mark Lewin. But they are not friends.

Georgia tag team champions Ole Anderson and Ivan Koloff have credited Dusty Rhodes. They won't say he is a great wrestler, but they agree that Dusty is a man who will never back down from anyone. "The fat boy has got a lot of guts," Anderson admits.

Killer Kari Kox has had a major disagreement with "protege" Jim

team, but rumors are circulating that they are not friends. According Hart, they don't have to be buddies. "What they do outside the arena is their own business," he points out. "As long as they win matches and make me a lot of money, I couldn't care less about their personal lives."

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A—ON—ASSIGNMENT

BY STEVEN FARHOO

"When your bags are always packed,
the stars don't seem to shine.
Night turns into day on endless
airport lines.
Don't make many friends, you'll
always say goodbye.
For the road is hard and lonely, and
knows no alibi."

WHEN MATT BROCK called me into his office, I was petrified. The walls smelled of old liquor, like the pool hall in Brooklyn my father never let me go to. Brock could see my frantic state. He quickly made his point. When Matt has something to say, he is as subtle as the Japanese at Pearl Harbor.

"Kid, you've been with us for a few months now," Brock began, "and we like the way you're coming along. I was talking with Pete [Editor-in-Chief Peter King] and I suggested we expand your responsibilities. You know I'm getting kind of stuffy in my advancing years, and I'd like you to help me cover some of the out-of-town stuff."

"From now on, there'll be a story for you to track down, or a match for you to cover on the road. Your expenses will be picked up, but you'd better bring back good copy."

I left the office shaking. I'm not sure whether I was happy or upset. But I did know that the experiences would be interesting. After all, I had



B relaxes in his New Orleans apartment (above). Despite the mask he conceals his emotions, B appears to be troubled, while waiting by his car (below). Will B return to Georgia?



never been out of New York before!

I threw together a few necessities (toothbrush, Cepacol mouthwash, Levi jeans, Converse sneakers, and pajamas) and took off for my first stop, the unique metropolis of New Orleans, Louisiana.

I was immediately faced with a crushing conflict. Matt Brock gave me a few addresses on Bourbon Street. He said it was essential that I visit them for a good time. But when I told my mom about Matt's suggestions, she told me to stay away. God knows what kind of places they are!

Anyway, I checked into a first-class hotel, ordered a Coke via room-service, and called Mr. Wrestling II on the phone.

"How are you, deuce?" I
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DRESSING COURTROOM

With Randy Gordon

MOST PEOPLE REGARD an investigative reporter as the Sherlock Holmes of the journalism industry. A minority consider an investigative reporter to be nothing more than a prying, meddling, despised, unwelcome snoop. I don't care how anybody views investigative reporting. It is my life.

It makes no difference how fans, promoters, or wrestlers feel about me or my job. One long decade in this business has taught me that what I do is necessary. And appreciated. I cannot possibly please every wrestler, promoter and fan with each move I make and with every word I write. I do not try to. My job is to report the facts. All of them. The truth often can hurt.

Many times, there is a story within a story. The main point of interest, the one that is right out in the open, is the one that is easy to get. Lazy journalists prefer to report on such a story. There is little work for them to do. They observe and write. It is the digging and uncovering of further information that creates top wrestling coverage. That is what I do best.

Investigative reporting is the most glamorous form of reporting, though glamor is not what I seek. The facts are what I



am after.

Not every man or woman was born to be a journalist. Not every journalist was born to be an investigative reporter. When I first became interested in investigative reporting, the wise old owl of wrestling journalism, Matt Brock, gave me a stern warning. "Investigative reporting can be hazardous to your health," he said.

Fred Blassie, a dangerous man, is a member of Randy Gordon's most-wanted list. Randy leads a crusade against rulebreakers and their managers.

Matt's words floated weightlessly inside my head for many months. I didn't take him seriously. By that time, my own lack of caution had caused me problems. I had been burned by The Sheik, nearly butchered by

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THE MORGENSEIN REPORT.....

By Gary Morgenstein

I AM PLEASED to report that the state of wrestling is good. Quite good. That comment is predicated not on any bias toward scientific stars or rulebreakers. It is based solely on my observation of the past year.

Since taking over Michael Kape's column a little over a year ago, I've had the

the sport. Some turn rule-breaker, others turn scientific.

Either way, they infuse wrestling with fresh blood and insert a revitalizing influence which every sport needs. They run the gamut from Tommy Rich in Georgia to Gino Hernandez in Texas. Men as diffuse as John Studd and David Von Erich contend for,

contain their opposite philosophies.

They are wrong. But a columnist cannot convince them of that. Only through their own efforts will the knowledge, indeed, the truth, that wrestling needs both good and bad enter their systems.

I've had many clashes with rulebreakers since I began this



Tommy Rich infuses Georgia wrestling with fresh blood. His wrestling is fast, exciting and disciplined.



John Studd battles for the emotion of the wrestling fans. He is a rising rulebreaker in professional wrestling.



Gary Morgenstein often wonders why he bothers with men like Captain Lou Albano. Lou is crazy and dangerous.

opportunity to travel across the country and talk with fans, wrestlers, managers, promoters and all the elements which compose this entity we call wrestling.

My friends, the condition of our sport is healthy. Enthusiasm for wrestling is reaching extraordinary levels in every sector of the nation. Young, talented wrestlers are flooding

battle for and demand the emotional attention of the fans.

Whether they are loved or hated, they are noticed. That is essential.

Rivalries continue uninterrupted. Some are inspired by foul betrayals. Others by irrational jealousies. A few because the combatants represent wrestling polarities. They believe the sport cannot

column. Several times, my life was jeopardized. Several times, I wondered why I wanted to bother with men like Bobby Heenan and Lou Albano.

Each time the assignment was completed in varying degrees of success. The answers came hurtling at me. Somehow, through stumbling and bumbling, through gallant

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LOOKING AT...

Matt Brock:



Jerry Lawler, the king of Tennessee wrestling. Lawler dominates all competitors in his state. He claims no one can compare with him.

FOR THOSE FANS unfamiliar with me and my work, this is a brief introduction. I'm Matt Brock. I've been writing about wrestling for, well, a long-long time. In case anyone thinks I'm old, I was a boy wonder. Since I never lie, I won't say how old I am.

My integrity speaks for itself. Matter of fact, it sometimes speaks for me better than I can. That's only after a long night researching a subject in a local establishment.

This month, I'm looking at Jerry Lawler. Other months I may be forced to squint or peer, depending on the quality of imports from Scotland. But that's another tale.

"I'm King of the Hill, King Of Tennessee," bragged Lawler. "There's no one in this region who can compare with me."

Wrestlers range from the humble to the boastful. I've found the excessively modest ones to be playing their own trumpets with a different decibel level. Those who have to toot their own horn are, well, why do they have to do it for themselves?

"I don't get the press or attention I deserve," Lawler insisted.

Another common complaint.

JERRY LAWLER



Lawler shows little respect for AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel (above). Jerry displays his strength and scientific knowledge with a headlock against Rick Steamboat (right). If Lawler ran for mayor of Memphis, few Tennessee natives would bet against him.

This time it has the kernel of validity.

Lawler is vastly underrated. Naturally, wrestlers always feel they are being short-sheeted in coverage. This time, Lawler's right.

"Year after year, I've proven myself to be tops in both ability and fan appeal," said the



handsome star.

I don't know about fan appeal. What the fans like or dislike has surprised me. Just when I think I have modulated the pulse, I'm shown wrong.

"Who's better than me? Bockwinkel? Hah, that's a good one." Lawler said sneeringly. "You think Harley Race has anything on me?"

"Come on. Break it up anyway you like. Lawler has it all over Dusty Rhodes. I'm better looking than Backlund. Got a better body than Bruno."

"When you people gonna wake up?"

As I said, egotism bores me. Maybe 'cause I'm such a humble guy. But Lawler has a case.

While the public fawns and faints over Bockwinkel, Backlund and the like, Lawler defeats them all down in Memphis.

"I'm telling you, I won this town," he said.

Quite true. Lawler's presence is everywhere. Lawler's posters flourish and emerge from many a store window. Lawler T-shirts are worn by everyone. Even the liquor stores display his picture.

But that's another story. □

The Harley Race Story:

Often, men are much more than they seem to be. Such is the case with the complex NWA champion, Harley Race. More than just a greedy champion, Race sheds light upon human instinct and the very nature of professional wrestling

**"HATRED
IN
MY
HEART"**



HARLEY RACE IS an interesting man. It takes a severe case of clouded vision to view him merely as a crusty old rulebreaker who wrestles only for love of the almighty dollar. Race is the NWA champion. But further examination into the man's heart and soul uncovers a startling truth. Harley Race is a creation of the sport he rules.

"I guess you could say I was sort of a wimpy kid," Race revealed. "I went through grammar school pretty easily, but when I got past grade school, the trouble began."

Harley Race displays his aggressiveness by stomping on Pat O'Connor (below). A bloody Race brawls with Pedro Morales (right). Race has an excellent working knowledge of scientific maneuvers. He bodyslams Don Muraco (far right). But to remain champion, Race says he has to stay mad.



"My parents always taught me to stay out of other people's business, I always did. But soon enough people were taking advantage of me. I was kind of a big kid, but when other kids made fun of me or slapped me around, I just ignored them. But it hurt inside. Boy, did it hurt inside."

"So one day I was getting it pretty good from a tough kid. I don't know what made me do it, but I just slugged him. It felt good. He didn't fall down, but he did have blood running from his nose. He apologized. I didn't get no

more horse-crap from those kids after that."

Race had learned his first lesson. His self-respect and pride have not wavered since that first right hand exploded on the bully's nose. But the harsh realities of adulthood left Race as confused as the timid grammar school kid he once was.

"I knew wrestling was the career for me," he recalled. "I studied hard. I put lots of spare time into reading about the old greats of wrestling. The moves they used were so classic. The sportsmanship

and sense of fair play was so beautiful. I mean, I used to get really off on the rules of the sport. I know it's hard to believe, looking at me today."

The NWA king began as a scientific wrestler. He was successful. But success was not enough. Race needed to be special. He wanted to be known. And most of all, he had a burning ambition to be the best. Wrestling champion of the world.

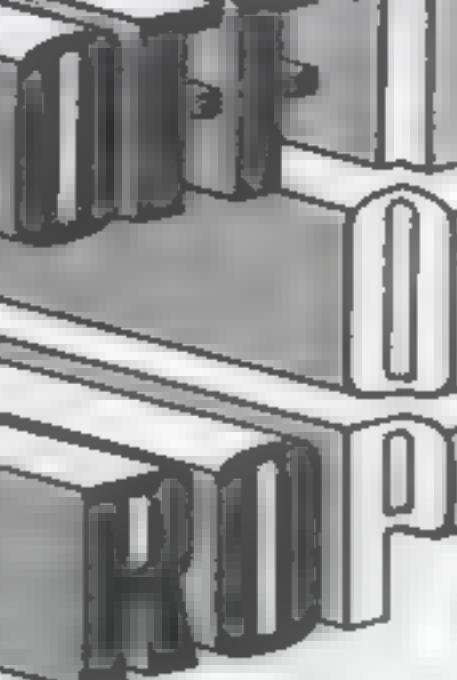
"One thing was clear after about two months on the circuit," Race said. "If I wanted to run around for a



Race flies high against former NWA champion Jack Brisco (above). In a battle of champions, Race stomps on a prone WWF king, Bob Backlund (above right). Showing incredible intensity and determination, Race does not let up against a bloody and exhausted Dick Murdoch (right). Experts believe Race's championship success is directly related to his personal pride and drive.

If you wish to contribute to Shocket's mailbag, send your letters to:

TOP ROPE
Box 48
Rockville Centre, N.Y.
11571



By Dan Shocket

MY NAME IS Dan Shocket. I am a wrestling columnist and reporter. For those of you who have never heard of me, a brief introduction may be necessary. I like the aggressive wrestlers. Men like Bockwinkel, Shaik, Patera, Flair, and Graham (Superstar, not clumsy Mike or ancient Eddie). Most fans, who possess no more intelligence than a dried cucumber, find my views detestable. As such, my mailbox is constantly flooded with letters. In this column, I will answer as many of them as I can.

Dear Creep,

How can you say those awful things about Rick Steamboat? He's my favorite wrestler and is always a gentleman. You keep insulting him, saying he can't wrestle without bribing referees. He's the best around. All my friends agree I think you're jealous

ELOISE MAXIE
Savannah, Ga.



One reader believes Dan Shocket is jealous of Rick Steamboat (above). Shocket despises scientific wrestlers.

Dear Eloise,

How could I possibly be jealous of anyone who has fans like you? All I have to say is that you never once in your letters mention Steamboat's supposed wrestling skills. I guess your mother told you never to lie. Too bad she didn't also teach you manners.

Shocket

Look at the record! You said Dusty Rhodes was a better wrestler when he was a rulebreaker. The record shows Dusty has won more matches against better opponents as a scientific wrestler than as a rule-breaker. What do you have to say to that?

DAVID STROTHER
Greenwich, Conn



Shocket claims Dusty Rhodes pays off the referees to win his matches.

Strother:

You get what you pay for. Dusty has put many referees' kids through college. I'd never say he isn't generous with his bribes.

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We, the working press, like Rick Steamboat. We see him as an exciting, talented wrestler, and an intelligent, fine young man. We are often critical of Steamboat because of our intense interest in his career. Please Rick, heed our words in this letter.

Rick prepares for a match (top, middle and bottom left). Against Harley Race (above), Steamboat adds a touch of extra pressure to a headlock

AN OPEN LETTER TO U.S. CHAMPION RICK STEAMBOAT



Steamboat has wrestled sensation-ally against Harley Race (left). Rick must curb his temper if he hopes to be a major champion. Battling former tag team partner Paul Jones (below), Rick shows no mercy. Steamboat has not fully recovered from Jones' betrayal.



DEAR RICK,

Before you leap to any premature conclusions, hear us out. Remember, we write this with your best interests in mind. Remember how highly we regard you. Remember the honest relationship we have forged over the years.

Forget Ric Flair. Forget the United States heavyweight title. Or else forget your career.

Your matches with Flair are no longer mere matches.

They've gone far beyond a feud. They've entered into an obsession. Perhaps Flair can properly incorporate obsession into his warped, mutated soul.

But you can't. Or rather, shouldn't. This has nothing to do with ability. Lord only knows the huge amounts of untapped skills which lie beneath your muscled exterior.

Nor does it have anything to do with toughness. Time and again, you've demonstrated an amazing capacity to brawl

with the best.

Yes, Rick. Time and again. That's the point. You've wrestled Flair too often. You're slipping into sloppy habits molded by the repetitious bloodbaths you've endured with Flair. You've beaten him. He's beaten you.

There's nothing left to prove. Go on to other opponents.

Ah, your title beckons, doesn't it? The U.S. Title you worked so hard to win was

(Continued on page 52)

BACK IN THE dressing room corner, Bob Backlund stands alone. He's polite, but never friendly. There's an invisible wall between the champion and the rest of the world.

It was only a while ago that Bob was everybody's friend. Easygoing, likeable, wanting to like others, Bob seemed to be a champion who managed to remain as one of the guys. People sought him out and Bob enjoyed their companionship.

Today, Bob allows no one to get close. He seems to evaluate every sentence, as if deciding how far the speaker can be trusted. He neither seeks nor takes advice. Bob Backlund is a man alone at the top.

Why the change? Everyone seems to have a theory. No one claims to have the answer. But every theory seems to center around Peter Maivia.

Bob Backlund shakes hands with his good friend, Andre the Giant. Does Bob fear that Andre will turn on him like Peter Maivia did? Maivia was Bob's best friend

"Bob respected Peter as if Maivia were a hero," said Arnold Skoaland, Bob's manager. "He admired Maivia's integrity. Bob trusted Maivia with secrets, fears and questions. Maivia knows more about Bob than Bob knows about himself. And after all that trust, all that affection, Maivia became a rulebreaker. All of a sudden, Bob's closest

friend became his enemy. That does something to a man. Bob's afraid to let anyone that close again."

Others feel there is more to it than that. Former champion Bruno Sammartino noted, "Backlund is very young to have the responsibilities of being champion. Everyone wants what he has. A champion has to realize that even his best



If 100 wrestlers were able to choose another grappler to switch places with, we'd bet 90 of them would choose the WWF champion, Bob Backlund. But now that we have uncovered Backlund's unrelenting nightmare, we doubt anyone in the world would want to be in his place

friends would kill for his title. That makes a man suspicious. You can never forget that.

"You have to learn, though, how to keep friends in spite of that. It's hard to

explain. You can never ignore that they want your title, but you learn how to make allowances. Bob was doing very well until Maivia became a rulebreaker. Now

he's afraid to make the allowances every champion must make. I don't blame him. I think back when I was his age. If my best friend turned on me, I don't know if I could have handled it.

"Backlund is doing incredibly well, considering. But incredibly well just isn't good enough. I hope he can break out of his protective shell. I keep wondering if I could have. I don't know. I don't know about Backlund, either."

It takes constant struggle for Backlund to overcome his naturally friendly nature. The fear of getting too close to anyone keeps him from reaching out to others.

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Backlund struggles against his former friend, Peter Maivia (left). Another friend of Bob's is Steve Keirn (below). But Bob doesn't trust anyone any more





Mil Mascaras and Dusty Rhodes pose together (right). Mascaras is determined against the rugged Mr Fuji (above).

NEITHER MIL MASCARAS nor Dusty Rhodes is a saint. Both have been involved in irrational feuds, often instigated by rulebreakers. They've had their share of brutal moments. They've done things they are ashamed of.

MASCARAS & RHODES:

DOES EACH MAN PRAY FOR THE OTHER'S DOOM?

In the intense, ambitious world of wrestling, egos and personalities sometimes clash as often as bodies inside the squared circle. Dusty Rhodes and Mil Mascaras, two decent men, find themselves locked in an inevitable battle for the fans' love





Mascaras uses his incredible strength and agility to headlock Ken Patera (above left). Dusty brawls with the Missouri Mauler (above right).

But they are not capable of harboring evil thoughts for very long. Their quick eruptions of temper are often followed by quicker apologies.

That's what makes this story so unsettling. To accuse Mascaras or Rhodes with such self-centered concerns would seem unnatural. It is not.

The facts, indeed, the sheer logic of it makes this conclusion compelling.

Does each man pray for the other's doom?

Presently, the WWF is crowded with scientific stars. Champion Bob Backlund. Ivan Putski. Bruno Sammartino.

Dusty Rhodes.

Unfortunately, an alliance can only sustain a certain number of scientific wrestling personalities. Right now, the WWF has reached its limit.

There doesn't seem to be a problem. At least on the

surface. Ah, but what of Mascaras' plans? Though it is not imminent, the masked man makes little effort to conceal his desire to return to the WWF.

"Yes, I always enjoy wrestling in the WWF. Everyone is so kind and knowledgeable there."

Especially, I like the fans," Mascaras said.

Here is where the equation is introduced. Bruno isn't about to leave. Nor is Putski. Surely not Backlund. Only one man's departure would make it possible for Mascaras to

(Continued on page 63,



Mil and Dusty make a brilliant tag team combination. They have teamed with tremendous success. But will the common desire to wrestle in the WWF separate them forever? Such an occurrence may be inevitable.

Shawn Michaels

Wrestlemania 1998

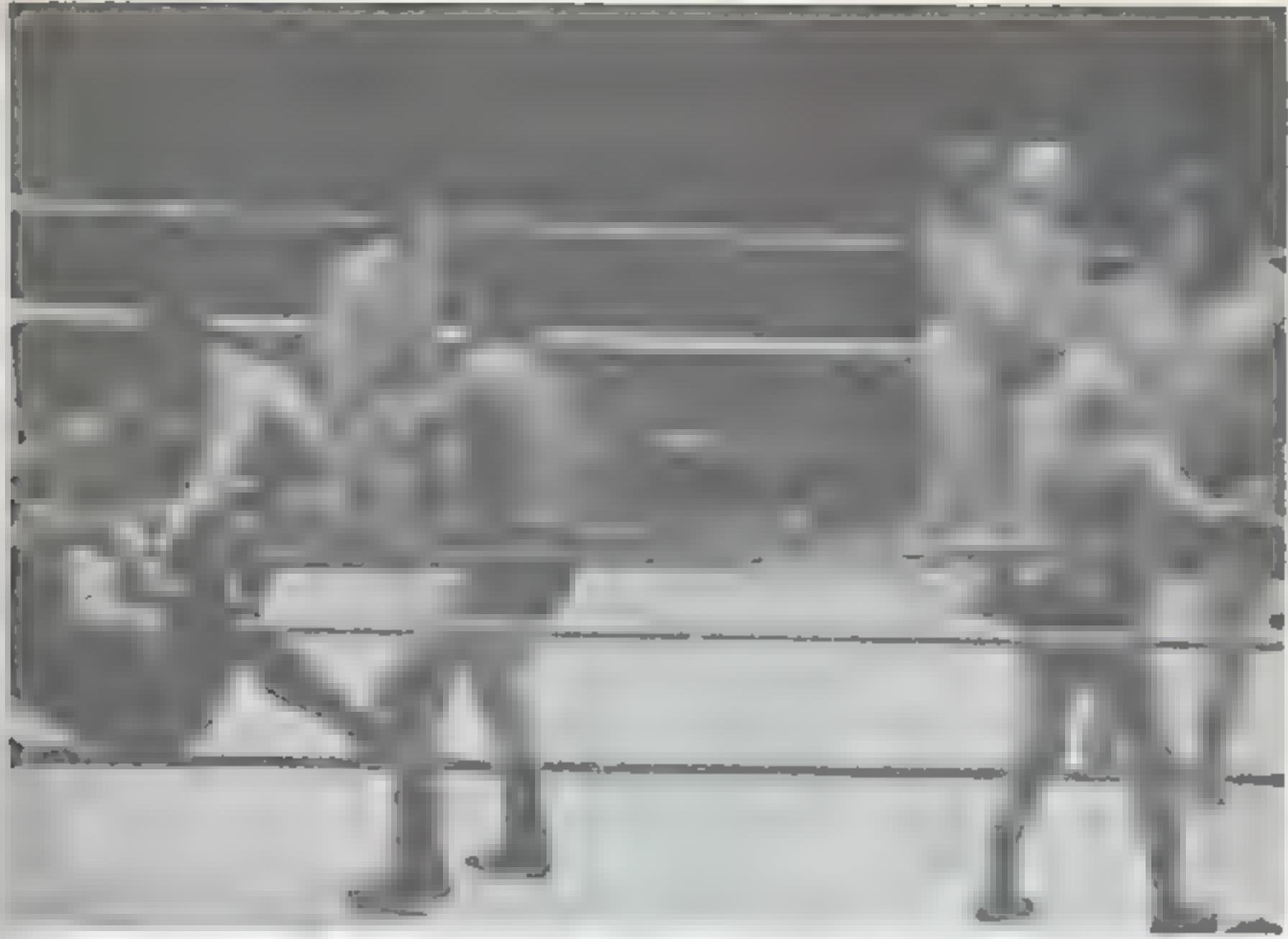
Bret Hart

Steve Austin

Triple H

ANDRE DEFEATS THE AWA. ALL IN ONE NIGHT!





SOME WRESTLERS SPEND a lifetime battling the top stars of their chosen wrestling alliances. To brag that one has defeated the prime contenders over a period of years is a worthy boast.

If Andre the Giant were a braggart, he could easily top that claim. You see Andre didn't need years or months or even weeks to beat the best AWA mat stars.

All it took Andre was one night. One Battle Royal.

"I was sort of rushed," Andre said with a mischievous grin.

There was nothing casual about Andre's destruction of the wrestlers in this Battle Royal. And there was nothing airy about the quality of his opponents.

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The Battle Royal action begins (above). Pat Patterson and Super Destroyer II doubleteam Andre the Giant (left). Jim Brunzell and Andre defend against the attack of Patterson and Ray Stevens (below left). Andre disposes of Super Destroyer II, despite the interference of manager Al Hays (below).





Bockwinkel in a recent title defense against Billy Robinson (above). Nick with his championship belt (right). Nick shakes hands with Robinson before a grueling defense (above right).

MIDWESTERN REPORT—

DAY BY DAY, the mats are covered with the dust of Nick Bockwinkel's empire. As yet, huge chunks from the throne have not been loosened. As yet, the crown is still perched atop his head.

But it is a perilous perch. Unmistakable signs of wear are creeping into his game.

Is the King finished?

"Finished? Does this look like I'm finished?" Bockwinkel screamed as he pointed to his massive upper body. "When are you guys going to stop bothering me with your damn, stupid idea?"

"Over the years, I've proven myself the greatest champion of all time. I am tough. I am fast. I



BOCKWINKLE'S THRONE IS CRUMBLING!

am durable

"And I need no one but myself to continue atop my kingdom," Bockwinkel said in quiet savagery.

No one but myself. Those four words, spoken in a whispering agitation, describe the dilemma Bockwinkel faces. Months ago, Bobby Heenan, manager of Bockwinkel and other top AWA rulebreakers, was suspended from the alliance after a run-in with

president Stanley Blackburn

For years, wrestling observers had insisted that Heenan was indispensable to Bockwinkel's continuing success. They said Heenan was the brilliant strategist. They said Bockwinkel was merely a muscular puppet.

Without Heenan, many felt Bockwinkel would fail apart.

"Heenan gave me advice, that's all, just advice," snapped Bockwinkel.

Heenan has become a festering sore to the AWA champion. Bockwinkel has struggled to achieve the recognition he feels is deserving. After three years as champion, after notable triumphs over the very best opponents the alliance has to offer, Bockwinkel does deserve acknowledgement as a superstar.

But is it ending?

In a bizarre way, those who

(Continued on page 66)

Flooded with business matters that were once handled by his manager, Bobby Heenan, Nick Bockwinkel has become a soft champion ready to be crushed. While his ring performances remain impressive, the AWA champion is a tired, confused warrior. Is the end of his title reign in sight?

VOLUME I NO. 1

WRESTLING

SEPTEMBER 1979

ENQUIRER

USE OF FOREIGN OBJECT CHARGED IN LADD-STEAMBOAT CLASH

BY MATT BROCK

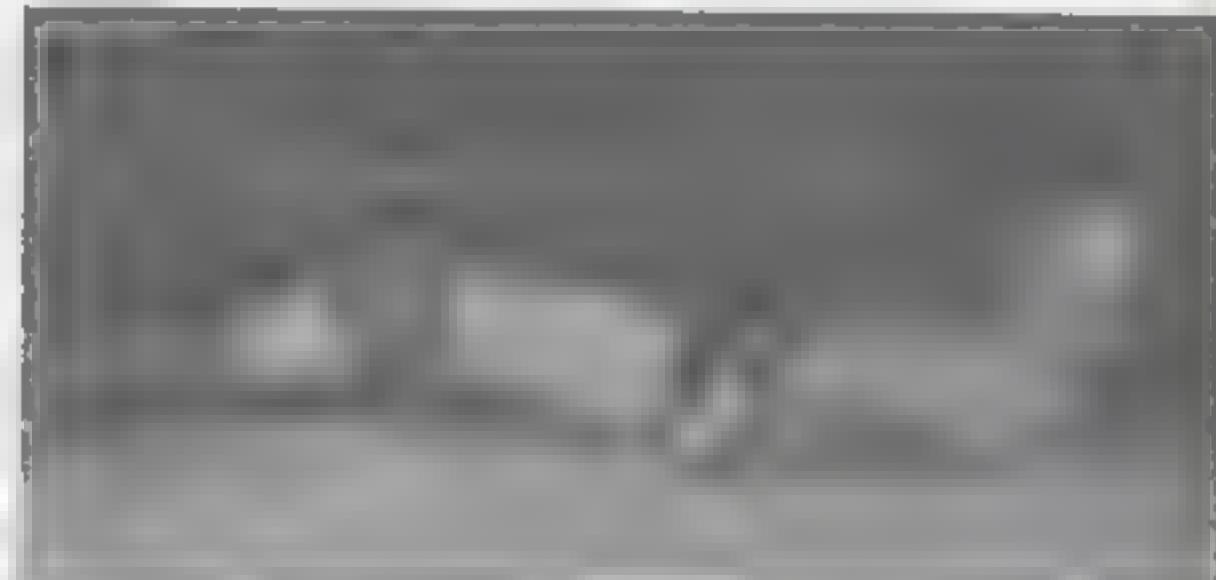
GRENSHORO, N.C.—Rick Steamboat claims his defeat at the hands of Ernie Ladd was caused by the Big Cat's illegal tactics.

"He used a foreign object," Rick contends, "a plastic knife he had hidden in his trunks. When we were wrestling in the corner, he reached into his trunks and pulled the knife out. He then smashed the thing right in my throat. I toppled over the ring ropes and was disqualified."

"I tried to get back in the ring but I couldn't breathe. My windpipe closed and I almost went unconscious. I should've expected something like that from Ladd."

FOREIGN OBJECT HIDDEN

Rick added that Ladd cleverly hid the weapon from the referee, which is why Ernie wasn't disqualified.



Enquirer photographer Bill Apker catches Ladd as he thrusts a foreign object into Steamboat's throat (left). To get the foreign object out of his trunks, Ladd usually pretends to be hurt while he reaches into his trunks (above).

When told of the accusation, Ladd replied, "That kind of stupid whining is just what you'd expect from somebody named Steamboat. I never use a foreign object because I don't need one. The punk just thinks I used a plastic knife

because there was so much pain. Well, all the pain was caused by my great strength. Steamboat doesn't know what it's like to be hit by a strong man. I take that back. After wrestling me, he sure knows how it feels."

KOLOFF DEMANDS BACKLUND BE STRIPPED OF WWF CROWN

BY GARY MORGENSEIN

NEW YORK, N.Y.—Former WWF champion Ivan Koloff has called upon the federation commissioners to strip reigning champion Bob Backlund of the WWF title.

CLAIMS COWARDICE

"Backlund ducks every top contender," said Koloff. "He and that serpent manager, Arnold Skoaland, are conspiring to deprive the legitimate contenders from legitimate title shots. Either the commissioners institute a round-robin tourney to determine Backlund's successor, or I settle this in the alley. Probably that's where Backlund belongs, atop a heap of garbage."



Koloff body-slams Backlund during Madison Square Garden title tilt last September (above). Koloff says Backlund ducks legitimate contenders.

KING'S HEAD BURNS OPPONENTS: INVESTIGATION SOUGHT

BY STEVEN FARHOD

TAMPA, Fla.—Sonny King is not really bald. This supposedly accounts for his stunning successes



King knows for sure.

in Florida. Sources within the Florida NWA offices confirm that King shaves daily and applies a dangerous substance upon his bald pate.

SECRET INGREDIENT IS THE KEY

Allegedly, this substance burns the skin of foes. To prevent a similar problem from afflicting his scalp, King applies a milky, thick liquid to his head. An unconfirmed rumor speculates this substance is derived from lamb ligaments.

"BOCKWINKEL TO FALL BY AUGUST" CLAIMS GAGNE

BY PETER KING

DENVER, Colo.—Nick Bockwinkel will fall by August! That startling prediction was voiced by former AWA champion Verne Gagne at a press conference Sunday.



TOO TIRED TO CONTINUE

"Bockwinkel is both mentally and physically exhausted," contended Gagne. "It's obviously that his game is faltering. The only question is who will be the one to beat him. But Bockwinkel will go by August."

EXCLUSIVE WRESTLING SCHEDULE
All Dates Are Subject To Change

ATLANTA, July 27: *The Omni*

ATLANTA, July 8, 13 & 20: *City Auditorium*

NEW YORK, July 2 & 30: *Madison Square Garden*

PHILADELPHIA, July 21: *The Spectrum*

WEST PALM BEACH, July 3, 10 & 17: *West Palm Beach Auditorium*

TAMPA, July 4, 11 & 18: *Fort Meade Armory*

OMAHA, July 7: *Omaha Auditorium*

DENVER, July 13: *Denver Civic Auditorium*

MINNESOTA, July 20: *Minnesota Auditorium*

CHICAGO, July 21: *Chicago Amphitheatre*

Every month, three reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport



(In each issue, a wrestler will be invited to a press conference. Three of our editors will ask questions on a wide range of subjects. What distinguishes this from other similar interviews is the prior stipulation that complete honesty will be demanded. This month, the interviewers are Managing Editor Bill Apter, Associate Editor Gary Morgenstern, and Associate Editor Dan Shocket. The man answering the questions is the Living Legend, former WWF champion Bruno Sammartino.)

BILL APTER: Bruno, thank you for offering this great Manhattan hotel suite as the site for the interview.

DAN SHOCKET: Yeah, Bruno, I have a great view of a laundromat from here.

GARY MORGENSTEIN: Just shut up, Shocket.

SAMMARTINO: Thank you, Gary, I would like to stick to wrestling and have a minimum of argument.

APTER: My first question concerns the current WWF champion. What's your opinion of Bob Backlund?

SAMMARTINO: You know, I was one of the first to predict Backlund as a coming star. Some guys have the special kind of skill which sets them apart. Backlund has strength, speed and intelligence.

"There is more to being champion than wearing the belt or beating contenders. You must act a certain way. Race does it. Even Bockwinkel does it. At this stage of his career, it is too early to say whether Backlund will become an unforgettable champion."



APTER I detect some hesitation
SAMMARTINO: There is more to being champion than wearing the belt or beating contenders. You must act a certain way. Race does it. Even Bockwinkel does it. At this stage of his career, it is too early to say whether Backlund will become an unforgettable champion.

SHOCKET: Speaking of champions, what about a great man like Ivan Koloff? Don't you think it's about time you conceded he is the superior wrestler?

SAMMARTINO: Doggone you, Shocket. That cheating, lying Russian dog is nothing but an alley fighter.

SHOCKET: Beat you, didn't he?

SAMMARTINO: By cheating.

SHOCKET: Oh, sir, everyone says they've been cheated. I have a video-tape of that bout. In fact, I show it at all of my dinner parties, and it clearly shows you were beaten fairly and squarely.

SAMMARTINO: No matter what you say, I know in my heart that he won by cheating.

SHOCKET: Are you now obsessed with beating Koloff?

SAMMARTINO: Not obsessed. A man has things he must do to prove he is a man. Beating Ivan Koloff is one of them for me.

MORGENSTEIN: A stirring response, Bruno. On my travels, I've found a common question about you. People are saying that Bruno Sammartino is

preparing to regain his title. What does Bruno Sammartino say about that?

SAMMARTINO: Well, setting yourself to pursue a title is not a light decision. Much preparation should go into it. You must train a certain way, select certain opponents, live a certain life.

MORGENSTEIN: Aren't you doing that with the number of matches you've been taking?

SAMMARTINO: Only in quantity.

MORGENSTEIN: But you're wrestling all the top ones.

SAMMARTINO: Not quite. I have not wrestled the champion. Until you wrestle the champion, you are not after the title.



"Well, I don't know if this would qualify as a gripe. Well, yes it would. The very lifeblood of our sport is the young talent. Unfortunately, many young wrestlers are not being encouraged enough."



"There should be more training camps. There should be more programs to train youngsters. Maybe some of the veteran wrestlers should band together and form more camps."

APTER. Bruno, any gripes you'd like to get off your chest?

SAMMARTINO: Well, I don't know if this would qualify as a gripe. Well, yes it would. The very lifeblood of our sport is the young talent. Unfortunately, many young wrestlers are not being encouraged enough.

There should be more training camps. There should be more programs to train youngsters. Maybe some of the veteran wrestlers should band together and form more camps. Even the fine promoters across the country should look into ways to promote young talent.

Remember, without young talent we would have no wrestling.

APTER: And without Bruno Sammartino, wrestling would not be what it is today. Thank you, Bruno

SAMMARTINO: My pleasure.

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

Every month, our reporters will compile wrestlers' most revealing quotes. Often catching the grapplers with their guards down, our reporters will work endlessly in obtaining interesting quotes on a variety of subjects

LOU ALBANO

"Rules are for losers. Ever hear of anyone who won by following the rules? How do you think rules got started? In the beginning, there was nothing. Through trial and error, they come up with rules. But they can be changed. That's what I do. Change the rules for the betterment of Lou Albano."



BRUNO SAMMARTINO

"You know, wrestling is a great sport. I remember when I was a rookie in the 1960s. An old man, I think he was a trainer or something, approached me in the dressing room one night and said, 'Bruno, you give wrestling your all and she'll reward you.' Doggones it, I've given my life to wrestling and I haven't been disappointed."



CLIFF DAY STEAMBOAT

"There's no room for sadism in wrestling. Maybe we should have a screening committee to ensure warped guys don't get licenses to wrestle. This goes beyond whether a guy is a rule-breaker or not. Maiming and crippling and enjoying it is not right. People like that shouldn't be allowed to wrestle."



RICK FLAIR

"Rick Steamboat makes me sick. I'm bored wrestling ugly babies like Steamboat. Until Ricky gets plastic surgery so he doesn't look like a baboon, I want him to stay away from me and my belt. Hope someone reads this to him."



(Continued on page 68)

FOR THOSE WHO remember, it was a painful scene.

Steve Keim was wrestling in ring center. His moves were fluid and precise. His determination was unyielding. His steel body was decorated with lines of supple strength. He was winning.

But nobody was watching. Sure, the fans, faithful to their hero as always, were magnetically drawn to Keim's

every maneuver. They squeezed with every headlock and strained with every armbar.

However the working press was ignoring Steve Keim. One writer was sipping his beer and chatting with a ringside official. Another journalist was walking toward the dressing room to interview a participant in the upcoming main event. A wrestling photographer was reloading his camera with film. "It's only Keim wrestling," the

photographer said, "what better time to take a break? Everyone knows Keim is washed up."

The truth is as plain as Jimmy Carter's hometown: The press has paid absolutely no attention to Steve Keim since the young scientific star suffered a broken leg several months ago. How can such a sensational star be left for dead when his every action indicates a full recovery from his crippling injury?

THE INJURY THEY WON'T LET STEVE KEIM FORGET

The working press is as much a part of pro wrestling as the turnbuckle, timekeeper, and figure-four leglock. Because crippling injury almost ruined his career, Steve Keim is being ignored by wrestling journalists. Can he survive the frustrating cold-shoulder?

Perhaps the answer lies in the stubborn nature of the sport of professional wrestling. Walter Carsdale, a long-time wrestling observer and expert of the squared circle, explains it best

"You see, when a wrestler is injured, everyone raises an eyebrow to begin with. The sport demands total physical perfection. Those not in shape will drown under the first wave. But Keirn wasn't only injured

He was crippled. A broken leg has ended too many promising careers.

"And wrestling journalists are a funny breed. They are very steep in tradition. Sure the kid is wrestling as well as ever. But the writers don't care about that. As far as they are concerned, the story of Steve Keirn has already been written: 'Promising Young Superstar Destroyed By Unfortunate Injury.' Until he wins a title or does something unique, his obituary will stand."

So Keirn seems destined to grapple in relative obscurity. Without the fans, he would most likely lose hope. But the

(Continued on page 70,



Displaying uncharacteristic behavior, Keirn bites the face of Jimmy Valiant (top). Steve works on Pak Song (above). Song helped break Keirn's leg. Keirn will forever seek vengeance by trying to whip Song (left and below).



"YOU PRESS PEOPLE have been giving me the big shaft all my career and I'm damn tired of it," the broad-shouldered man shouted.

This capsule of resentful hate is none other than Wahoo McDaniel. He has a gripe. How valid it is will be determined by professional scrutiny.

"Professional what? You guys don't know the first thing about professional this or that," Wahoo charged. "I've read your stuff. Poor, poor and triple poor."

"But that doesn't mean anything. I want to know why you never do stories on me. I want to know why you never put me on your lousy cover."

Among Southern scientific wrestlers, McDaniel ranks high in popularity and skills. Though an explosive temper has denied him victory in title matches, he remains a superb and formidable wrestler.

Yes, Wahoo, we concede, gladly, that you are deserving of press attention. But the fault lies not in our typewriters, dear Wahoo, but in yourself.

"What do you mean, turkey? You saying I don't want to get stories written about me?" Wahoo moved to within a few, menacing inches of the interviewer.

The relationship between athlete and press is a fragile one which requires cooperative nourishment on a regular basis. We give, you give.



WHY WAHOO McDANIEL DOESN'T GET THE PRESS HE DESERVES



A bloody McDaniel wages war with NWA champion Harley Race (above left). Wahoo applies a chinlock against a confused, helpless Joe (above right).

Wahoo tries for a pin against Dory Funk Jr. (left). Wahoo battles his arch-enemy, Ric Flair (right).

"You don't give, Wahoo.

"Lying dog-cutlets."

Wahoo screamed, a mere two inches from the interviewer's face. "I held the Southern States title and you never approached me for a story. I've held a lot of tag team titles. Then you do a story on my partner

"Of course, the classic

Wahoo McDaniel enjoys a beautiful relationship with the fans of wrestling. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of his rapport with the press. A simple misunderstanding may be the cause of this unfortunate alienation

example is the 'Wahoo McDaniel Loses His Temper And Gets Disqualified In A Title Match' story. How many of those have you done?" Wahoo yelled.

Concededly, there is a validity to some of your charges. Perhaps you have been neglected in the press. To a degree

But ignoring your volcanic temper would be ignoring our journalistic duty. That we cannot do. However, that apparently is not the point.

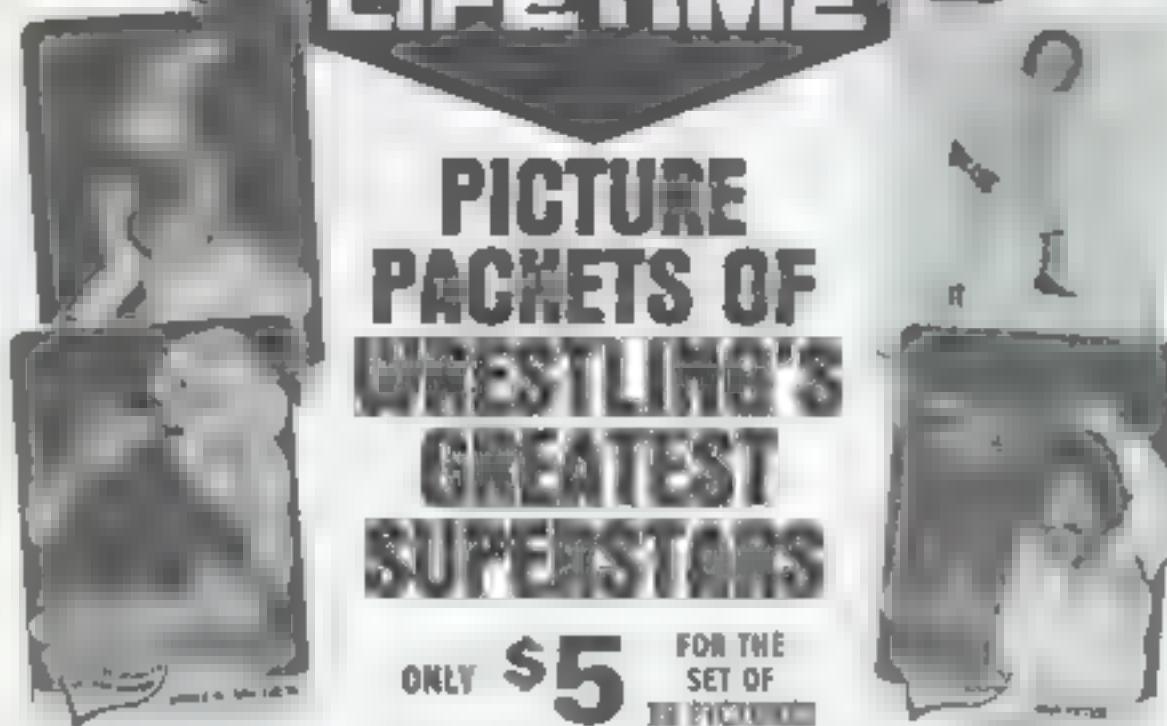
(Continued on page 71)



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RINGSIDE

(Continued from Page 8)

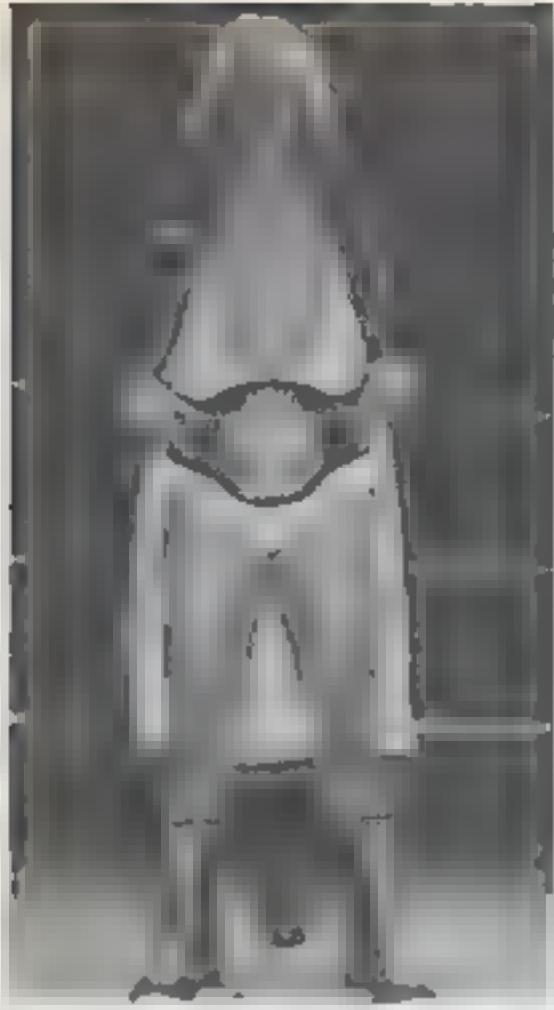
"Handsome" Jimmy Valiant is doing well as a single wrestler (his brothers Jerry and Johnny hold the WWF tag team title). Valiant is working his way up in the ratings and hopes to land a match against WWF champion Bob Backlund in the very near future.



Rookie Skip Young has been receiving words of wisdom from veteran Pedro Morales in the Mid-Atlantic area.

Rookie Skip Young has been getting good pointers in the Mid-Atlantic area from new-found friend, former WWF champion Pedro Morales. "The guy is a genius," Skip says. "I've teamed with him twice and he's shown me moves that really fit my style. They're moves I never would have thought of. What a great man!"

No names mentioned, but scientific wrestlers in Portland, Oregon, getting quite upset with one of their comrades. The wrestler has been pulling too many practical jokes that have been less than funny. If he doesn't watch himself, someone is going to belt him!



Eddy Mansfield, the "Continental Lover," is feuding with California star Chavo Guerrero. Mansfield claims, "California is my town!" Chavo is a west coast mainstay and a fan favorite.

We finally heard from the "missing" Spiros Arion. He called to let us know it is no one's business where he is. He said his manager Fred Bassie sends his best wishes to all (maybe you can figure that one out—we can't).

"Continental Lover" Eddy Mansfield wants it known that Chavo Guerrero has offered him \$10,000 if he will do one of two things: leave California, or manage Chavo. Eddy replies, "California is MY town! Let him leave. Number two, I will never manage a no-talent blob like Chavo Guerrero!"

Captain Lou Albano says he may also have another career. "I'm an occasional free lance show biz agent" he boasts. "I've managed that Elvis impersonator, Greg Peters, some biggies like Raquel Welch, The Fonz and Robert DeNiro, and others." Albano also says he does not want this information printed. Sorry Lou, we must have goofed!

From Ringside, this is Bill Apter. See you next time! □

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ON ASSIGNMENT

(Continued from Page 10)



began (only his close friends call him deuce), "let's get together for an informal chat."

Always obliging, II told me to meet him at Crazy Shirley's, a famous New Orleans jazz joint, later in the day. We would talk as the clarinets and saxophones filled the hot, moist bayou air.

Crazy Shirley's was an exciting place. The waiters all knew II, which surprised me. After all, I thought New Orleans was only a quick stop-over for the masked scientific star. Georgia was his real home.

"Yeah, I hang around here a lot, I guess," II said hesitantly. "New Orleans is a great town. I've met a lot of great people, and the fans are super. I've been very happy since the first day I got here."

But what of Georgia, II? The fans are dying to have you come back. Everyone wants to see you kick Masked Superstar's butt into the town dump. Has Georgia lost its native son?

Mr. Wrestling II driving to his favorite jazz hangout, "Crazy Shirley's," in New Orleans. II misses Georgia but enjoys wrestling in Louisiana.

"I'll tell you, Steve," II said, his voice serious and low. "This Georgia thing is killing me. I want to go back so badly. But things just aren't right. I took a few matches there recently. Things weren't the same."

"Sure, the fans responded in the same way. But the difference was in me. My feeling inside was strange."

II swallowed hard. A misty glaze filled his large, soft eyes. His mask could not hide the emotions that were flowing from his insides.

"As a famous writer said a long time ago," II continued, "You can never go home again."

A tear began to trickle down his masked cheek. The tear rolled and wavered, then flowed and fell, just like the melancholy notes of the saxophone in the corner of Crazy Shirley's. □

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Indicates C.R.D.M. has been submitted to the appropriate H. B. and L. Board of Directors and A.L.I.C. and G.A.C. and G.A.C. have been informed. (See page 44-45 for more information.)

The influence of temperature on the rate of absorption of oxygen by the blood was determined at different temperatures.

"Qui a fait, ne peut défaire," quel message de la nature et des hommes nous en apprend. — Le — (L'Amour des Sciences, Chateaubriand, 1846)

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THE STEAMBOAT

(Continued from Page 29)



Steamboat is a study of intensity in all his matches. If he stops worrying about Ric Flair, his career will continue to skyrocket.



stolen by Flair. You are flooded with vengeful thoughts. You want to prove your initial victory was no fluke.

Relax, Rick. By whipping a man like Flair and winning the title, you etched an eternal line into wrestling history. All wrestling rejoiced when you won. All wrestling mourned when you lost.

But you are bound by a weighty tradition. And that tradition coldly informs you

Steamboat twists the arm of rulebreaker Baron Von Raschke (above). Rick uses many scientific methods.

that men who lose their U.S. titles rarely regain them. All they win is further aggravation, further torment and further disappointments.

You won it once That was
triumph enough. Leave Flair
and the title he taints behind
Leave behind the obsession
which is ravaging your soul
Leave behind the convulsive
hate.

This leads to another point, one we fear may delay you from the stardom you should attain. It concerns your temper.

We don't suggest you disarm yourself. The fires which erupt and spread through you are the fires of ambition, of life. Without them, you would be altered. That goes beyond wrestling.

You must learn to channel your anger. Not curb it. Restraints will only erode your volcano. But now it is becoming counter-productive. You are getting disqualified much too often. You are forgetting the refined maneuvers which made you a star.

You're still young, Rick Steamboat. Now you must think and plan your moves. In a few years, they will be instinctual. But since you must rely on pre-planned thought, your irrational angers interfere with the mental process.

Thus, disqualifications result when there should be none.

Limitless lists of grappling triumphs are available to you. Titles, fame, money and adoration are yours. All you must do is seize them.

But don't grab them with quivering fingers. If your grip is too tight, you will crush the dreams you have.

Hold the dreams loosely in your hand. Allow yourself to grow without undue pressure, without subjecting yourself to brutality and insensitivity.

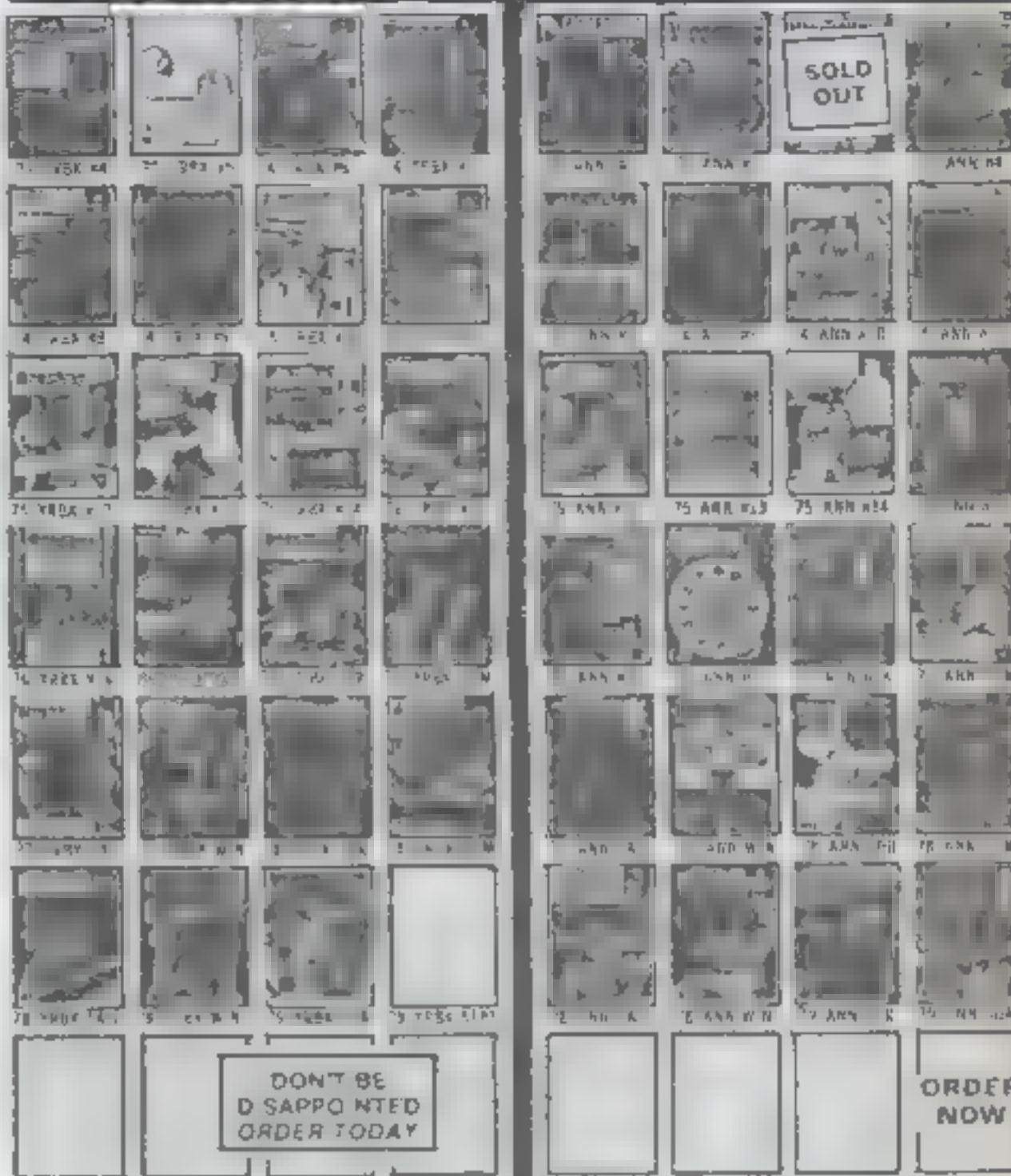
It is waiting for you, Rick. Now pursue the glory that should be yours.

Sincerely,
The Editors

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BOW BACKLUND

(Continued from Page 31)



"A wrestler," he said, "is a man alone. He's out to prove he's better than everyone else. When you get in that situation, each man you meet is your enemy."

"I've trusted two people in my life. One was a friend from college. He died. I still miss him. The other was Peter Maivia. He turned on me. Funny thing, I still miss him. A man needs a friend he can trust. People live a long time without things they need."

"I don't trust anyone now. I'll work with people, but I won't count on them. Everyone is a potential traitor. There are no exceptions."

How long can a man survive, always fearing a knife in his back?

"Wrestling," Bruno Sammartino noted, "is a sport where a man stands by himself. Backlund, or anybody, can stay on top without trusting anyone else. I can think of any number of champions who were successful without

Manager Arnold Skoaland and his former champion, Bruno Sammartino, and his current champion, Bob Backlund (above). When Maivia turned rulebreaker, he attacked Skoaland, as well as Backlund. Maivia enjoys hurting Backlund (below).



ever trusting anyone else. I don't think it's fair to name them, so don't ask.

"I could also name a few who collapsed from not trusting anyone. Which type is Backlund? That's anybody's guess. I think the

kid can gut it out. He has a lot of courage. When he wrestled Maivia and beat him, that was the acid test. Bob should be able to handle anything else. But I can't say for sure. No one can."

So far, Backlund remains successful. Still, those who know him well are worried.

"Bob likes people," Tony Garea remarked, "and he needs company. After a match, we used to go to a diner and talk about



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wrestling and life until the sun came up. You've seen him when he gets excited. He loves talking about things, sharing experiences, being with friends. Now that he won't let himself enjoy those things, a good part of his life is destroyed. I don't know how long this can continue before something snaps. If he does snap, I don't want to be around. I can't imagine anything sadder."

Bob Backlund is a man alone at the top. It's where every wrestler dreams of being. Backlund's dream has turned into a nightmare. □

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DRESSING ROOM

(Continued from Page 12)

Abdullah, bitten by George "The Animal" Steele, had ceremonial salt rubbed in my eyes by Mr Fuji and both my legs nearly broken by Greg Valentine

Even stupid animals learn new tricks faster than I learned to use caution. Caution is now as much a part of my investigative tools as the figure-four leglock is to Greg Valentine's rulebreaking repertoire

This brings me to another aspect of wrestling: Rulebreakers. Simply, I despise them. Not all of them, but most of them, especially the vicious ones. Those are the ones who will go to any lengths, to any extremes, to win a match. There is nothing that they would not do to secure victory. They will cripple, maim, blind, burn, use foreign objects and cheat their opponents in their crooked quest for victory. I regard them as licensed criminals, men who should be behind bars for the remainder of their miserable lives. Greg Valentine, Captain Lou Albano, Fred Blassie, Ric Flair, Abdullah the Butcher, The Sherk, Mr Fuji, Tor Kamata and Ivan Koloff are just a handful of the men I despise most in wrestling. Whenever I write about them, objective as I am, I always write negatively.

There is nothing nice I can tell you about rulebreakers. Even if I investigated one of them thoroughly for a year, I'm sure I would not have one nice thing to tell you about him. So I don't try. What I report is the truth. By snooping and prying, I can find out information known only to a select few. My investigations have saved many top scientific wrestlers from certain destruction.

I have often been criticized for protecting and defending scientific wrestlers. Many fans

ask me why I think scientific wrestlers are the answer to mankind's problems. The truth is, I don't. There are many scientific wrestlers whom I do not care for, and the feeling is mutual. Some of them have personalities that would make even the most hardened rulebreakers cringe. It is not that I worship scientific wrestlers. It is that I detest rulebreakers. I loathe them. They are a cancerous growth on professional wrestling. I want to be the doctor who finds the cure.

My instruments for surgery and my tools and methods of operation are vast. I use bugging devices to listen to wrestlers' conversations, practical jokes to upset them, ultra-expensive camera equipment to study them and psychological warfare to upset them. I even have a full-time makeup man on my staff who I feel is the best in the business. I need his services because most rulebreakers will not allow me within earshot. As another person, I have no problem approaching them hassling them and spying on them. With a highly-powerful telephoto lens, I photograph objects as small as a dime from 100 yards away. I develop the picture, blow it up and read the date. I have used the camera many times to read letters or notes sent from one wrestler to another. The information I have stolen has saved many scientific grapplers from falling prey to the ruthless element in wrestling.

You can love me or you can hate me. You can join my crusade against rulebreakers or you can stand and fight me. You can hurt me, but you cannot intimidate me. Throw bombs at me and I will throw an even more destructive arsenal right back. But I promise you one thing: When the smoke has cleared, professional wrestling will be the ultimate winner. □

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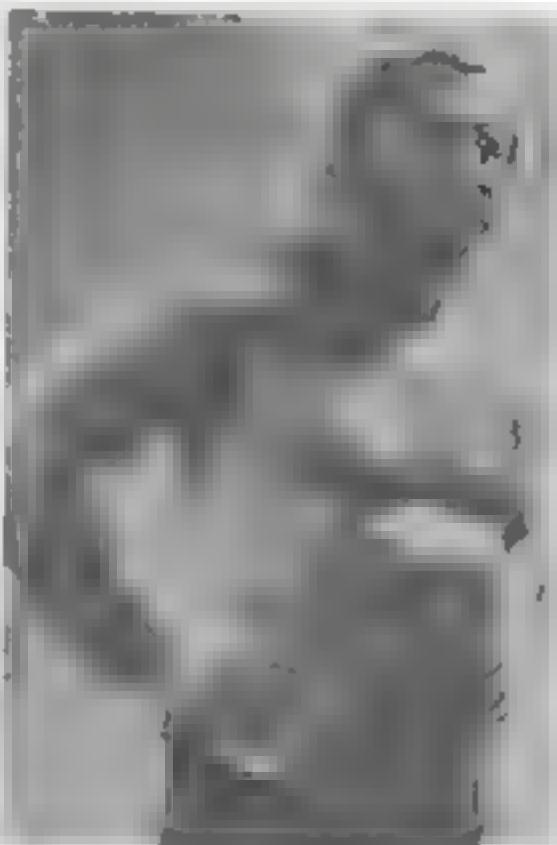
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MORGENSTEIN REPORT

(Continued from Page 18)



Nick Bockwinkel, champion of the AWA (above). Nick is a committed titleholder. Sonny King is also a determined wrestler and manager (below).



harvest or foolish bravery, I had achieved something I felt was important.

That was my satisfaction. And that is a satisfaction every single participant in wrestling feels at one time or another.

It is felt by the promoters, the men who invest their hard-

earned money into bringing what they believe is superior entertainment into a city. Seeing their proud smiles at the conclusion of an exciting evening confirms my opinion.

And it is felt by the wrestlers, good and bad. Whatever their methods, however I or you may disagree with them, they are at least striving for something. They are alive. They are involved. A Nick Bockwinkel or Sonny King is as committed as Bruno Sammartino or Bob Backlund.

Methods differ and goals change. Still, they are pursuing something.

Attendant with the goals of the wrestlers are the strategic geniuses known as managers. They, too, are committed. Again, their ways may be corrupt or noble, but they are dedicated.

Finally, there are the fans. I've met hundreds and hundreds of fans, from Dusty Rhodes supporters in Florida to Peter Maivia haters in Hartford. They are young and old, black and white.

Yet the unifying cord which bands them together in this unwieldy, fantastic group is their concern. They are interested, curious, demanding and passionate. Anyone who leaves a wrestling arena with eardrums perfectly functioning should clean out the wax.

I've been in places where the roar was literally deafening the impassioned shouts contagious, even interfering with my journalistic detachment.

Yes, the state of wrestling is healthy. It will remain vital and growing as long as the vitamins of concern are fed daily into its systems. □

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OFF THE TOP ROPE

(Continued from Page 27)

Dear Mr. Shocket,

As a fan of Ivan Koloff for many years, I want to thank you for writing those nice things about him. Everyone else calls him a rulebreaker and boos him. I know he's the greatest around. It's the referees who keep him from winning a title.

Thanks for sticking up for the guys everyone else calls rulebreakers. You're the only wrestling columnist who will

JACK DONNE
Birmingham, Al

Dear Mr. Donne,

I consider it an honor to be able to praise Ivan Koloff in print. It's nice to know there are a few intelligent wrestling fans separated from the usual hordes of morons.

Dirty (censored)

You better not come to Minneapolis, not after what you said about Verne Gagne. Here's a man who's been a wrestling hero for decades, always showing how great the sport can be. What gives you the right to say, "Verne Gagne was a washed-up old man when he was young?"

I think you stink!

A VERNE GAGNE FAN
Minneapolis, Minn.

Dear Fan,

I earned the right to insult Verne Gagne by being a wrestling expert. From your letter, I assume you're an expert on stench.

Dear Rat,

After what you wrote about Bruno Sammartino ("He's a clumsy insult to wrestling, Italians and the human race"), I think you should be shot. Everyone knows Bruno is a living legend.

I hope he meets you one day and breaks both your arms!

FREDDY GROVES
Waterloo, Ill.

Dear Freddy,

According to the dictionary, a legend is something accepted but not verifiable. I think that describes Bruno perfectly. As for breaking both my arms, Bruno wouldn't dare touch anyone before paying off a referee.

Dear Mr. Shocket,

While I rarely agree with what you say, I usually accept that you have a right to say it. But this does not give you the right to lie.

You said Bobby Heenan was framed. Everyone knows Heenan deliberately took a chair and hit the AWA president over the head. That is why Heenan was banned from the AWA.

Say what you want. As long it is the truth

WARREN MALEST
Tulsa, Ok.

Dear Mr. Malest,

Heenan was framed. The truth is rarely what is seems. □

MASCARAS & RHODES

(Continued from Page 33,

re-enter the WWF

Dusty Rhodes.

"I cannot bring myself to wish ill upon another man, especially one I admire as much as Rhodes," said Mascaras.

"Well, I wish ill on some men, like The Sheik. There must be some way to accommodate both my ambitions and Rhodes," Mascaras continued.

One peaceful resolution would occur if Rhodes graciously stepped aside to permit Mascaras to wrestle in the WWF. Think again.

"I know this is goin' to sound bad, but I leave and I come and I go when I want," Rhodes said. "I respect Mascaras. That has nothing to do with it.

"Maybe the federation couldn't take another scientific wrestler, another big fan favorite. All that matters is how Dusty Rhodes, the great "American Dream," wrestles. Hey, maybe Mascaras will suffer a bunch of defeats and then he won't be asked to come here," Dusty continued.

That is the crucial point. Should Mascaras suffer shocking defeats outside the WWF, his attractiveness would be diminished.

But the converse is also true. Should Rhodes fall victim too often, should the fans grow indifferent to the "American Dream," Rhodes might find himself



Rhodes' famed "Bionic Elbow" is about to come crashing down upon the protected head of Professor Toru Tanaka. Rhodes is currently wrestling in the WWF. Mascaras would like to appear in the federation also.

eased out.

Since Rhodes is unwilling to leave unless it's on his own accord, the only solution to this problem is one to be found within the confines of the

squared circle.

Dusty Rhodes must lose. Often. Convincingly. Perhaps brutally.

"Mascaras wants to wrestle here?" chuckled Ivan Koloff. "If Mascaras wants Rhodes to leave, ask the masked moron to arrange a match between fatso Rhodes and myself. Guaranteed Rhodes will leave the region. On a stretcher."

Sometimes wrestlers are held to higher standards than they should be. After all, they are only human. Precisely those human faults which grate on Mil Mascaras and Dusty Rhodes may make them pray for the other's doom. □



Mil's fantastic flying maneuver catches another foe off-guard.

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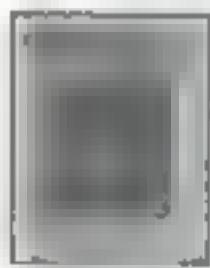
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ANDRE BEATS THE AWA

(Continued from Page 35)



Tag team partners Ray Stevens and Pat Patterson try to eliminate Andre (above). A determined Andre manhandles Stevens (left). Andre was the winner of this memorable Battle Royal, which included many AWA superstars.

Jim Brunzell, Ray Stevens, Billy Robinson, Nick Bockwinkel. Those were just a few of the top men involved.

"I like to wrestle the best. If not the best, why bother?" Andre shrugged.

Actually, this Battle had grown out of a farce of a challenge delivered by Nick Bockwinkel several months ago. "Andre is a big bag of hot

air. If he had any guts, he'd come and try to take us all on. But he won't. I said if he had any guts," Bockwinkel said with a malicious grin.

Obscenity laws constrain us from printing Bockwinkel's reaction to Andre's acceptance of the challenge. Nothing prohibits us from reporting the results.

Andre clobbered em.



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Bodies were flying out of the ring like drunks out of a saloon on a Saturday night.

"Man, is Andre tough," marvelled Billy Robinson.

"Is there a formula to whip him?" wondered Brunzell.

If there were an answer to that, the rulebreakers in wrestling would have formed a communal bank to jar and patent the stuff.

"Battle Royals are my forte," Andre said with a shrug. "What really got me going was Bockwinkel's challenge. I wouldn't have done it otherwise. But I wanted to show that loud-mouth what Andre the Giant is made of."

And for the final word.

"Take away his size and strength and what have you got?" asked Bockwinkel. □

BOCKWINKLE'S THRONE

(Continued from Page 37)



An infuriated Bockwinkel stomps on Jerry Lawler (top). Former manager Bobby Heenan instructs Nick during training (left). Nick goes wild against Billy Robinson (above). Nick whips Greg Gagne (below).

predicted Bockwinkel's difficulties without Heenan are right, but for the wrong reasons.

Underrating Bockwinkel's physical abilities is hazardous. And erroneous. With or without a manager, Bockwinkel is a superior talent. Even without Heenan, the AWA champion possesses enough knowledge to plot his own tenacious strategies.



So it is not in the ring where Bockwinkel misses "The Brain." Outside the squared circle, the added responsibilities once assumed by Heenan are tiring Bockwinkel.

"It's a pain, handling the money, making road reservations, all the trivial but necessary garbage Bobby used to do," complained Bockwinkel.

"It's not like I can't handle my own affairs. I just can't be bothered with all this small-time stuff. I guess it's not so trivial. But it does take my mind off my matches," Bockwinkel admitted.

Purposeful disqualification in the face of imminent defeat is an old Bockwinkel trick. Now, more than ever, he is resorting to this ploy to keep his belt.

Strategies, refinement and concentration have been lacking from Bockwinkel's efforts.

He seems to tire more quickly, a fact supported by the hastier disqualifications. He seems unable to escape from holds with the brutal ease he once demonstrated. Even his infamous disdain for fans has lessened.

In short, there is a glassy glaze to Bockwinkel's eyes, the look of preoccupied worry.

However, there is little mercy in wrestling, especially for a man with so many enemies.

"Poor Bockwinkel. I tell you, my heart bleeds for him," sneered long-time enemy Billy Robinson.

"I think one of us will shove him off the mountain awful soon," predicted Verne Gagne.

It would be the ultimate irony if Bockwinkel were topped not because of a superior maneuver, but due to some trivial business matter. The day may be rapidly approaching. □

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

(Continued from Page 43)



NICK BOCKWINKEL

"After a great deal of thought, I believe that Bobby Heenan should be made commissioner of a major wrestling alliance. Here's a guy with a lot of brains and moxie who's forced to listen to intellectual inferiors. This game has few greats. Me and Bobby are two of them. Wasting natural resources is criminal."



MIL MASCARAS

"I love my mask. It is like a part of me, like my hands, my legs, my torso. Yet it is not. My masks are beautiful. Men who do not wear a mask cannot appreciate its loveliness. Some try to demean my mask. Some try to unmask me. I would sooner die than permit my mask to be torn from my face."



IVAN KOLOFF

"The quality of American wrestlers is pathetic. This decadent culture encourages men to go soft and fat. Look at me. There is not an ounce of fat. Pure steely muscles ready to spring and attack. That is what the Soviet Union does for a man."



ARNOLD SKOALAND

"Managing a wrestler is difficult, but rewarding. Every night Bob [Backlund] goes out and successfully defends the title is an exhilarating and satisfying moment for me. I wouldn't want to do anything else." □

STEVE KEIRN

(Continued from Page 45)

fans are not enough. The writers and photographers are the historians of the sport. Promoters, fans, and other wrestlers depend on the press to keep all the news flowing. And if Keirn's name disappears from all stories, he may soon disappear from all arenas.

Because the press is turning its back on Keirn, he may be run out of the sport.

"Hell, it's just not fair," a confused Keirn said. "You know, in my recent matches, I've been putting in a little extra effort. I've even sacrificed technical perfection so I might

be more exciting. But it doesn't matter. I could whip Race, Backlund and Bockwinkel on the same night and then smash Andre the Giant and nobody would notice."

"I don't like to brag, but since my injury has been fully healed, I think my performances have been better than ever. I was talking to Mike (Keirn's best friend and tag team partner Mike Graham) and he agrees with me. He volunteered to talk to some of the writers and photographers to see if there was some kind of conspiracy, but I told him not to. Until this all changes, I guess I'll just have to keep wrestling and winning. If I don't go crazy in the meantime. I'm being treated like a damn unproven rookie!"

The seriousness of Steve Keirn's problem cannot be denied. He has seen glory. He has been a champion. Today he is forgotten. But the problem can easily be resolved. After all, you're reading this story, aren't you? □

Keirn desperately tries to break Song's legs (above and below). Will Keirn ever receive the press coverage he enjoyed before his leg was broken? Steve has been ignored since returning from the injury. But he is wrestling well.



WAHOO McDANIEL

(Continued from Page 47)



McDaniel and Crusher were once a successful tag team (above), but they never received fair press. McDaniel brawls with an expert, Killer Karl Kox (left). Wahoo has been a regional champion (below).



What is becoming apparent is the breakdown in communication between us. Be honest, Wahoo. How many times have you been rude to reporters?

"You guys annoy me," was the confession.

Okay. But unless we receive cooperation from you, we can't interview. And unless you pose, we can't photograph cover shots.



"Yeah, but . . ." Wahoo faltered.

We're not seeking saint-hood. We make mistakes and we have the courage to admit when we do. But we need the cooperation of the wrestlers.

Some wrestlers absolutely refuse to talk to us, to be near us and to have anything other than a contemptuous relationship with us. We try not to permit this to poison our attitude toward them.

Then there are those who extend complete cooperation. Naturally, they receive a lot of press, most of it justified by their ring behavior and accomplishments.

And then there are those like Wahoo McDaniel.

"Yeah, me," Wahoo said.

These men have merited attention, both in and out of the ring. They share a violent dignity few can attain.

They are popular, they are tough. They deserve acclaim.

"Damn straight I do."

Then talk to us. Remember, we are only the connection for the fans. We are the rod through which this harshly sensitive flow must pass. Love and hate. Disdain and affection. Without the press, the bridge cannot be erected.

So talk to us, Wahoo. We're not villains. We know the fans want to read about you. Let's establish a positive relationship.

"Okay, I'll give it a try," McDaniel concluded. So will we. □